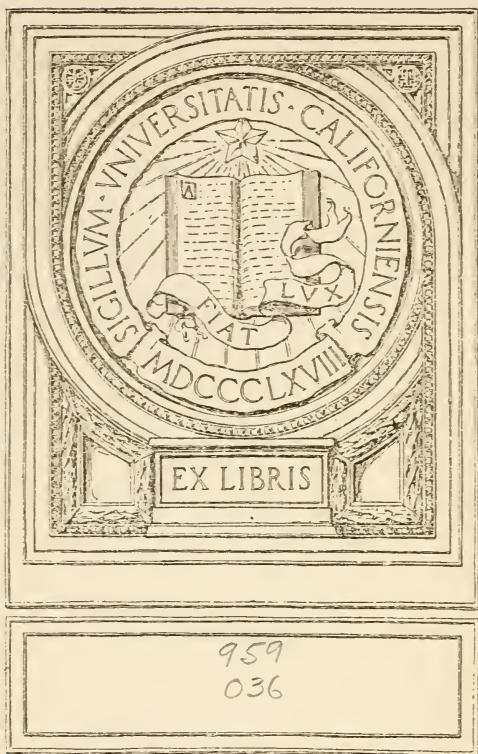


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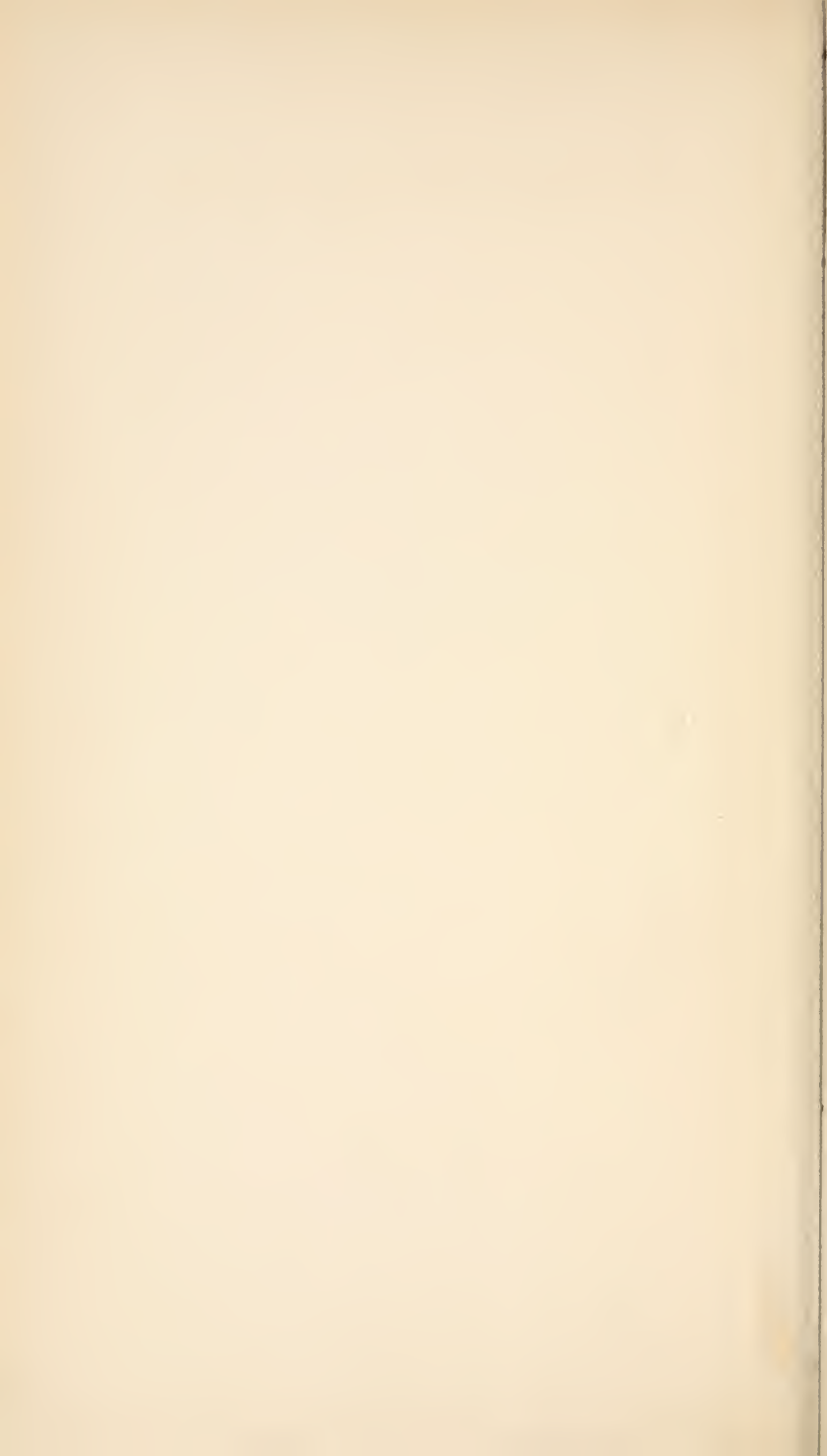








THRENODIES



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THRENODIES

BY

JOHN MYERS O'HARA

SMITH & SALE
PORTLAND MAINE
MDCCCCXVIII

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SMITH & SALE

TO THE MEMORY
OF MY FATHER AND MOTHER

547828

*Of this edition two hundred copies
have been printed.*

No. 101

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THRENODIES



THE STREET OF DREAMS

A LONG the street of dreams,
Deserted now and ever overcast,
With no familiar gleams
Of golden lamps that lit it in the past,
I glance with tears and linger to the last.

Along the street of dreams,
I listen for a footstep in the night ;
Afar, at first, it seems,
Elusive as an echo in its flight,
Then near, and nearer, at the threshold quite.

Along the street of dreams,
O sadness of the unreturning sound,
When, from the heart's extremes,
Forsaken in the shadows that surround,
We lose it in a silence more profound.

IN PATRIS MEI MEMORIAM

I

IN the lone hour of winter and the wind
His warrior soul went forth ; the fateful night
Lifting in awful vastness to affright,
And heaven's remotest star the journey's end ;
But the illimitable way could send
No terror to his soul ; the ultimate light
Flickered afar, and on the eternal height
A waiting seraph bade him to ascend.
And if the tragic bourne of life shall be
The final road to rest's eternity,
Then all is well with him ; and if there are
Embattled ways that go from star to star,
His soul shall still achieve ; eternal sleep,
Eternal life, either is his to keep.

IN PATRIS MEI MEMORIAM

II

The funeral marches for the mighty dead,
In slow procession, dole that answers dole,
Through the unlifting shadow on my soul,
Pass with far echo to a martial tread ;
The ashen twilight deepens overhead
As one accordant bell begins to toll,
And in the after-silence to console,
Voices accost me from the vast and dread.
And as the shining gates of dream divide,
The seraphs stand expectant on the steep,
And softer than a music heard in sleep
The mournful bugle sweeps the shadow wide ;
A road of radiance slants across the deep,
And he descends it slowly to my side.

IN PATRIS MEI MEMORIAM

III

By the fond name that was his own and mine,
The last upon his lips that strove with doom,
He called me and I saw the light assume
A sudden glory and around him shine ;
And nearer now I saw the laureled line
Of the august of Song before me loom,
And knew the voices, erstwhile through the gloom,
That whispered and forbade me to repine.
And with farewell, a shaft of splendor sank
Out of the stars and faded as a flame,
And down the night, on clouds of glory, came
The battle seraphs halting rank on rank ;
And lifted heavenward to heroic peace,
He passed and left me hope beyond surcease.

THE CANDLES

THE candles of death
Burn at her head,
Burn for the soul that has fled ;

In deep of the night,
Flicker and trace
Phantom smiles on her face.

The candles of death
Burn in their frame,
Burn with funereal flame ;

In deep of the night,
Flicker and keep
Ritual watch o'er her sleep.

AVRIL FUNÈBRE

APRIL, bereft of her,
One with the vanished Mays that knew her not,
The countless Junes that still in joy shall come ;

How can you fling
So heartlessly your blossoms to the wind,
And laugh from frantic throats of all your birds ?

April, your ecstasy
Runs bridal in its rapture o'er the earth,
And pours in other hearts a chalice'd bliss ;

But brings to me,
A discord in the unremitting song,
The haunting shadow of autumnal death.

AD MATREM AMANTISSIMAM ET CARISSI-
MAM FILII IN ÆTERNUM FIDELITAS

WITH all the fairest angels nearest God,
The ineffable true of heart around the throne,
There shall I find you waiting when the flown
Dream leaves my heart insentient as the clod ;
And when the grief-retracing ways I trod
Become a shining path to thee alone,
My weary feet, that seemed to drag as stone,
Shall once again, with wings of fleetness shod,
Fare on, beloved, to find you ! Just beyond
The seraph throng await me, standing near
The gentler angels, eager and apart ;
Be there, near God's own fairest, with the fond
Sweet smile that was your own, and let me hear
Your voice again and clasp you to my heart.

THE PRIMROSE

THE primrose that she loved — I see it bloom,
As on a shrine, beside the vesper sill ;
And her sweet spirit in the silent room,
So sentient of her now, is with me still.

The primrose that she loved — a gentle flame,
Like her fair soul, the fairest of the flowers ;
It shares the sigh that breathes my mother's name,
Love's prayer and incense in the shadowed hours.

EVOCATION

THE evening lamp,
The shades pulled low, the world
Shut out with night ;

The reading time,
The cherished books, the one
Loved presence near ;

Benefic hour,
So like her soul, of joy
Serene and deep.

I dreamed no day
Could ever come, O death,
When she could go.

How clearly now
I bring her back, the light
Upon her face ;

And see her sit,
A gentle ghost, beside
The unlit lamp.

THE GOAL OF THE SHADOW

TURN to the shadow, my soul !
Turn for the solace thou cravest,
Rest for the weakest and bravest,
Balm for the whole
Of the heart at the goal
Of the shadow, my soul !

Turn to the shadow, my soul !
Nothing is there to affright thee,
Voices of fear that benight thee
Die like a toll
Far away at the goal
Of the shadow, my soul !

Turn to the shadow, my soul !
Pass through the Night unappalling,
Fathom the Great Silence falling,
Slip from thy dole
And sink down at the goal
Of the shadow, my soul !

THE DREAM

"Is the tide in? I had a dream."

I HAD a dream,
A dream of fair expanses,
A dream of golden light, a dream of day ;

I caught a gleam —
The vision that entrances
The eyes of our beloved who are away ;

I had a dream,
A dream of things hereafter,
A dream of olden joy in other lands ;

It was supreme,
Alone of love and laughter,
Of smiles and happy tears and meeting hands ;

I had a dream,
A dream beside a river,
A river that was flowing to the sea ;

And it would seem
A summons to deliver
My spirit to the tide that rose for me ;

I had a dream,
A dream of voices calling,
And one sweet voice so clear above them all ;

And down the stream
A phantom dusk was falling,
And I was drifting seaward to the call ;

I had a dream,
A dream of waves abating,
Of rifts of silver breaking on a shore ;

On death's extreme,
Where with the dawn was waiting
The one beloved that I shall see no more.

ELEGY

AS the tired day
Stoops at the western gate
Her sandals to undo,
And in the amber blue
Of vesper skies
The one fair star is late,
My eyes
Take tears from my sad heart ;

And thoughts as gray
Gather a deeper night
Than now descends on me,
Wherein I cannot see
In any niche
A lamp's unfailing light,
From which
Old loves, consoled, depart ;

But vain to say,
Beloved, the void is dumb,
And all the stars a snare
To widen its despair,
For love must sigh
A prayer when death shall come,
And I
Would be whate'er thou art !

AUTUMNAL GRIEF

LEAVES on the ground,
Dead as hope in my heart ;
Only a withered sound
The wild gusts start.

Bare branches, too,
Lift like my soul a lyre,
Where winds of song rush through
With wasted fire.

And the harsh sky,
Callous to my despair,
From one who may not die
Repels the prayer.

TWILIGHT AT WOODLAWN

THE vesper through the silent vista steals —
Beside a cross a marble angel kneels ;

And in the loveliest city of the dead,
A carpet of autumnal leaves is spread ;

But not as velvet for a royal room —
I tread its ashen echo to a tomb.

The gray forgetting of the lonely years
Forbids my arid eyes the olden tears ;

And age, that leaves me dreaming where I stand,
Has dried my sorrow like the desert sand.

DOMIDUCA

O DOMIDUCA, dearest deity !
Joy of the home-returning, all my heart
Ascends in prayer, mingled with tears, to thee !

O Goddess of the hearth, who ne'er would part,
But bring the absent dear one evermore
Home to the watcher waiting at the door.

O Domiduca, tenderer than all,
When life is ended, take me by the hand
And guide me where the darker shadows fall !
Ah, show the immortal threshold where they stand
Eager to greet me, even as of old,
With the fond smile my eyes no more behold.

AT EASTER

FLOWERS of Christ,
Pallid flowers,
Flowers of the Resurrection,
Languorous Easter lilies
Filling the chancel,
How my heart drinks deep,
Deep of your perfume.

But I see
Other flowers,
Flowers from the slopes of Eryx,
Regal indolent roses
Piled on an altar,
Up to the marble
Knees of a Goddess.

TENEBRA CRUCIS

O CREED of love and laughter, creed of youth,
Here, at the crest of years,
I know you keep for life a deeper truth
Than abnegation's tears.

But no idyllic verity can make
Death spare nor age delay,
And Time, that leaves them unperturbed, must take
The happy Gods away.

And I must see, when memory would call
Old faith to ease my loss,
Upon the bright Hellenic sunshine fall
The shadow of the Cross.

THE ROAD TO ACADEME

ONE golden hour of immemorial dream —
Alone I walked the road to Academe,
And saw the river grow a thread of gray
Among the olives, while the orb of day
Flushed Lycabettos with a final beam.

I paused where Plato, at the grove's extreme,
Seemed pensively to watch the rosy gleam
Relinquish all the summits nor delay
One golden hour !

Sleep brought oblivion of the sordid scheme,
And made me royal in my soul's esteem ; —
The great Greek bade his new disciple stay,
And leisurely we took the homeward way ;
I was companion of the mind supreme
One golden hour !

THE TRINAL GLORY

THE trinal glory ! beauty, love, and death !
These are the three, and worthy of the breath,
The singing breath that soars to find the stars ;

These are the end, of all that makes or mars ;
No other choric altars build for me,
O life, but these, the perfect trinity !

Death, love, and beauty ! brighter than the sun
That on her blazing lyre of temples shone
When Greece with marble pæan smote the light ;

And stormed the world with her harmonic might
Of golden singers, singing to despair
Their love of beauty, making death so fair.

PARENTALIA

WITH fruit and garland for the rustic shrine
Came Roman youth and maid,
And poured a fond libation with the wine
For each ancestral shade.

They came in their confiding faith to make
The old parental rite,
And dreamed the manes took the wheaten cake
Upon the altar white.

And so with kindred reverence I keep
The night that souls return,
But at my vigil window where I weep
The Christian candles burn.

ELEUSIS

(TO J. L. H.)

I PASSED in dream the ruined Dipylon
While yet the rosy tremor of the dawn,
Reaching above the summits to the skies,
Scarce limned the distance where Eleusis lies.

Along the Sacred Way, a soul apart,
I walked with holy ardor in my heart,
Serenely as the myriads that strode,
In ages gone, the tomb-companioned road ;

A pilgrim to the Greater Mystery,
I had no hint of what it held for me,
But hopeful of the ritual to come,
I journeyed toward the Telesterium.

.

No lips reveal the secret of those rites,
O Friend, Friend of my heart, but when the nights
Are void of any hope, and as I gaze,
Conjecture sinks to ashes with the blaze,

Your words recur, and like the Grecian wise,
You make me see the journey with your eyes,
From the crowned city, where had dwelt the soul,
To dissolution's Eleusinian goal ;

You give me Nature's mood to go with peace
Along the Via Sacra of surcease,
Although no answer to my question may
Come back to be a torch upon the way.

AN URN FROM HADRA

PENSIVE I left the old sarcophagi,
The stelæ carved for unimagined fame,
And heard a ghostly whisper and a sigh
As toward the room of yellow urns I came.

And one of many lifted from the sands,
In Alexandria's necropolis,
Depressed me with the dream of ashen hands
That reached to clasp it from a dread abyss.

My glance upon the Grecian letters fell,
A faded semi-circle on the gold;
They seemed to blur anew with some farewell
Of phantom grief by cycles unconsolated.

A vision rose like vapor from the urn —
The homing hoopoes crossed the waning light;
I saw the glow on Ptolemy's palace burn,
The wave of Mareotis meet the night;

And writhing seaward in the windy gust,
The flame of Pharos floated to the skies;
Beyond Rhacotis whirled the desert's dust,
O'er Hadra's tombs the moon began to rise;

And by a cypress-circled stele knelt
A girl with hidden face and golden hair;
I read the carven epitaph and felt
The sudden tremor of a strange despair.

.

Passer, my dust reposes at thy feet !

*When youth was mine and beauty hers, alas,
Death spared me not for love ! O pause and greet
Karysta, in the city, should she pass ;*

And tell her that Diyllus waits her still

*In dewy fields beyond the sombre stream ;
Ah, thou shalt know her by the tears that fill
Her eyes and veil the azure of their beam !*

LETHE

SO noiselessly it flowed he scarcely knew
If such could be, a little space away,
Shadow or river stealing dimly through
The ashen day.

He stood a brooding while beside the brink,
Then made a cup, with palms that curved as one,
To hold the water while his heart should drink
Oblivion.

But from the wave he saw her eyes of dream,
Sad as the past's remorseless mirror framed,
Look upward into his, and from the stream
He slunk ashamed.

ANASYRTOLIS

SWEET shade of Anasyrtolis,
O thou, with life untimely done,
That flittest on the fields of Dis;

No lips have thy sad lips to kiss,
So oft from Lykas turned in fun,
Sweet shade of Anasyrtolis.

He makes the beechen shadow his,
Since thou no more with song art one,
That flittest on the fields of Dis.

His flocks untended stray amiss,
His steps the myrtle covert shun,
Sweet shade of Anasyrtolis.

Art thou forgotten all to bliss,
With soft and shy caress for none,
That flittest on the fields of Dis?

Hast thou no memory of this
Fair land beneath the mortal sun,
Sweet shade of Anasyrtolis
That flittest on the fields of Dis?

SPRING IN LESBOS

O PHILOMEL, messenger of the Spring,
What olden strain of grief is thine to sing?
The light wind lifts the apple boughs in bloom
And the white petals drift across a tomb,
And Sappho's name seems hidden where they heap
A snow of fragrance on eternal sleep.

The dim sea turns to amethyst above
No weary galley from a land of love,
But the long olive slopes are still the same
As when the girls from Cos and Sardis came,
A nubile throng that quivered to the note,
O Philomel, from thy ecstatic throat.

O Philomel, messenger of the Spring,
What olden pang of heart is thine to sing?
The little theatre of long ago,
With named and carven seats, was just below,
The temple where her lovers listened long
To the wild passion of her pristine song.

The marble fragments gleaming at my feet
Restore themselves in dream as Sappho's seat,
The last rays wreath it with a rosy fire
And take the shape symmetric of her lyre,
And thy despair where wind and bough rejoice,
O Philomel, is her enraptured voice.

THE ANSWER

AND the high Gods made answer to my prayer !
Oracular they came, and bade me dare
A vatic height, serene and doubting not ;
And thrice I did accost them, asking what,
Ye throned Olympians, is life ? And love ?
And what is death, the mystery above
All thought of things divine ? And then I heard
Their voices roll the heaven-shaking word ;
And life and love they answered me, but death
Caught as a vital anguish at their breath ;
Helpless they seemed, speech-stricken, and I saw,
With foreheads bending to eternal law,
Great shadows half enfold them, half reveal
Divinity discrowned, and chariots wheel
Skyward with shattered thunder — they were gone,
Lost in the storm-cloud ! radiant broke the dawn !
But the high Gods returned not ! Even so,
They, too, methought, must die before they know !

ET EGO IN ARCADIA

HE stooped and read,
Upon the tomb,
No words the dead
Addressed to doom ;

With careless laugh,
He slowly traced
The epitaph
By time defaced ;

A shepherd lad,
He found no gray
Appeal that bade
The passer stay ;

No long regret
For mortal bliss,
Lamented yet,
But only this ;

A line he knelt
To clearer see ;
"I, too, have dwelt
In Arcady."

THE TRYST

AS one to arms of love,
With bridal stars above,
He went to death ;

And sped elate of soul,
As runner to the goal
With rhythmic breath ;

So light of heart he flew,
The Greek but dimly knew
The mortal fear ;

He went to death as might
A victor through the night,
The triumph near.

ATROPOS

A TROPOS, dread
One of the Three,
Holding the thread
Woven for me ;

Grimly thy shears,
Steely and bright,
Menace the years
Left for delight.

Grant it may chance,
Just as they close,
June shall entrance
Earth with the rose ;

Reigning as though,
Bliss to the breath,
Endless and no
Whisper of death.

FOR A POET'S TOMB

HE carved a weeping nymph with bended head,
Her shoulder hidden by the flowing hair,
To lean against the portal of the dead
And sorrow there ;

He made the marble take a rhythmic grace,
For beauty more than song he deemed divine,
And in a blithe procession at the base
He linked the Nine.

SISTE VIATOR

STAY, traveller! 't is my tomb! no more the day
Shall shine for me along the Appian Way!
And yet, though dust, I speak; and lest my urn
You pass unheeding, never to return,
I bid you pause and read beneath the vine,
That wreathes the tomb as once the brow of mine,
A name the Muses loved; for I have seen
High Helicon, and Delos, and the green
Of Mitylenean hills, and humbly trod
Where Pindar took his supper with the God;
Tibullus was my friend, and Ovid knew
The unlamenting voice that speaks to you;
A poet I, as they; now ashes here,
I crave the passing tribute of a tear!

VALE

BRIGHT pageant of the world that I must leave,
Splendor of regal nights and epic days,
Enchant me still lest I should stoop to grieve,
While greener in death's shadow grow the bays.

I sought for beauty and I worshipped it
In marble temples with the pride of song;
The spacious vista of my dreams was lit
With all the moods that unto art belong.

And I shall pass as the great Pagans passed,
The wearers of the purple in their might;
The loss of earth may daunt me at the last,
But not the terror of eternal night.

THE DYING PAGAN

θανατος τριλλιστος

O DEITY of Epidauros, now
I lift no prayer, Asklepios, to thee!
Although the air is cool upon my brow,
And evening wafts the vernal balm to me,
And life is sweet in its serenity.

I would not live! To Thanatos I breathe
The sigh that rises fainter from my heart;
Around my pallid brow I would not wreath
One final garland for the poet's art,
For I am tired of all, with all would part.

The leafy murmurs deepen where I trod
The way of holy shadow, and I hear
The solemn whisper of the Chthonian God,
A sound of infinite soothing to my ear,
Above all earthly voices overdear.

The healing fountain in the Tholos lifts
Its limpid prayer that sinks in silver spray;
Across the ripple in the basin drifts
The crimson tremor of the dying day,
The valediction of its parting ray.

And deeper now than on thy lyre of leaves,
Oaks of Dodona, comes to me the sigh
Of that consoleless wind that grieves and grieves
With voice subdued for one about to die,
The sole caress that soothes me where I lie.

I hear it as I heard it when a child,
And still the brooding awe comes back to me,
But only yields an exaltation mild,
A ghost of transient ardor that I see
Pass in the pallid light of memory.

The olive orchards in the distance grow
A slope of velvet to my weary sight ;
I just discern the shadowed path and know
The carven Nike is the glimmer white,
And feel no last despair for art's delight.

The golden temple Polykleitos reared,
With marble grace entrances me no more,
And all its votive beauty I revered
Has lost the lure that drew me to adore,
Where others but the boon of health implore.

Its curve of Doric columns that I love
Becomes a shining blur upon my eyes,
And just beyond their shimmer is a dove
That in unceasing circles flies and flies,
Chaonia's bird that wakes no least surmise.

The sun's receding beam forsakes the crest,
The lurking shadow deepens in the room;
I breathe the fragrance with a keener zest,
And see with brighter vision in the gloom,
The last refulgence ere the hour of doom.

O fair Dione, on thy myrrhine base,
White figurine I worshipped long ago,
Why should I turn to thee with haggard face
When youth alone, with all its ardent glow,
The joy of thy beneficence may know?

O thou, with flush of roses at thy feet,
The last red garland on thy altar laid,
No more in quest of beauty shall I meet
The vision of perfection that I prayed,
Thy marble contour in no mortal maid.

And yet I turn to thee, for thou art still
The one Olympian to me benign,
But I shall never feel the plastic thrill,
Nor gloat again upon each lovely line
My eyes discern from knee to shoulder shine.

And have I worshipped, Goddess, but in vain,
I who was ever captive to thy thrall?
Thy gift was pleasure but I found it pain,
Pain in the end, and of thy raptures all
Not one supreme caress would I recall.

How futile is devotion to thee now,
And yet I half surrender to thy smile,
So potent is the memory of how
Its unresisted ardor could beguile,
A thought that makes the shadow lift the while.

But nevermore, O Goddess, shall I steep
My senses in the memories that throng ;
I have no single joy for Time to keep,
No sorrow for the years that art or song
With their immortal echo might prolong.

I ask no consolation at the end,
No solace from the faiths that I disdain ;
I have no prayer of any kind to send
To any God for any loss or gain,
For any prayer would be an effort vain.

The summons comes to my assenting soul ;
I feel the icy rigor slowly creep
Through arm and limb and reach the final goal,
My heart whose last pulsations faintly keep
A fitful struggle with unwaking sleep.

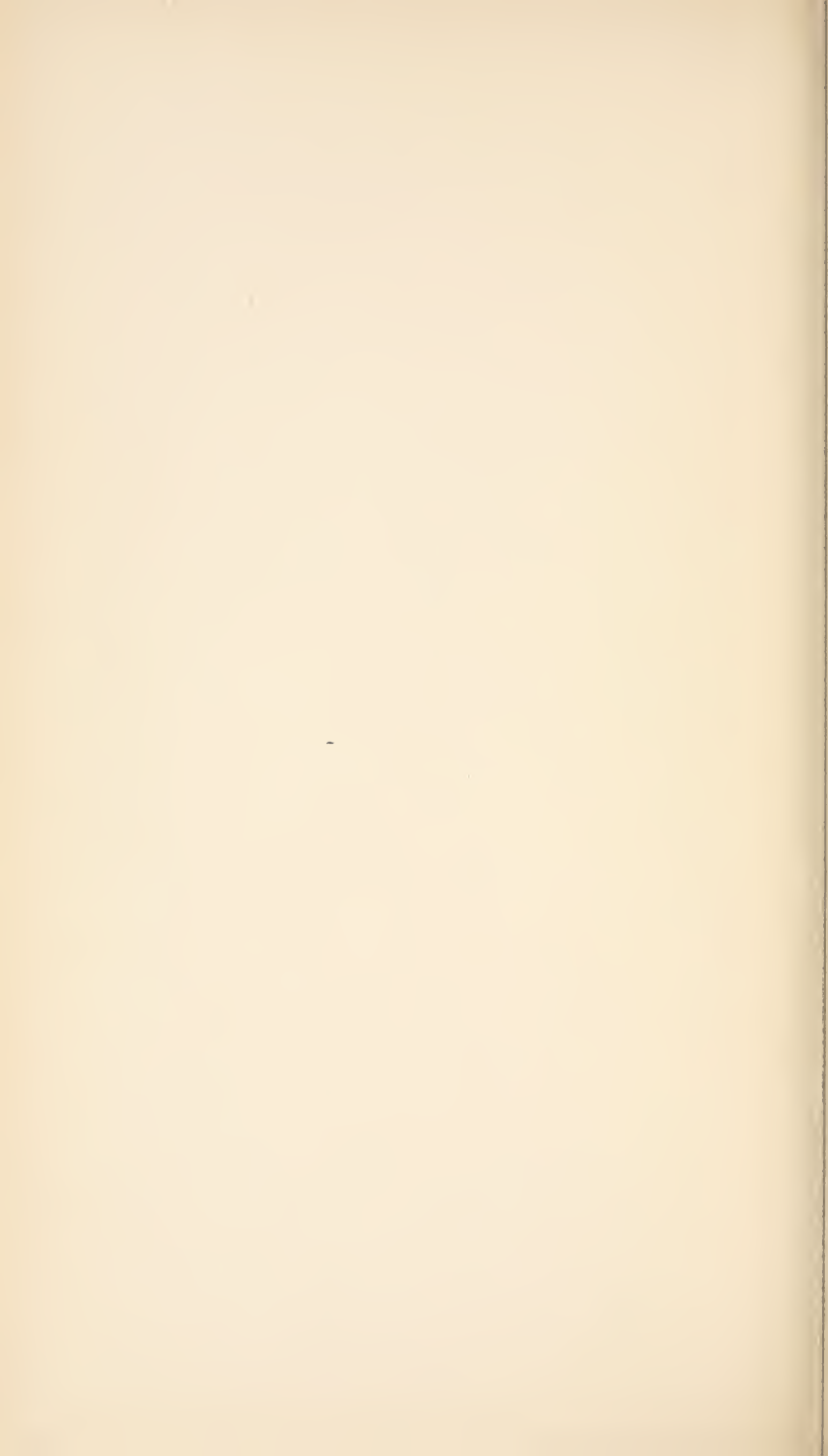
All things grow dark around me, none are near,
No grieving few, no mother, child, or wife ;
And it is well, I would not have them here,
Not one of all I knew and loved in life —
Alone I choose to pass from mortal strife.

PRAVER

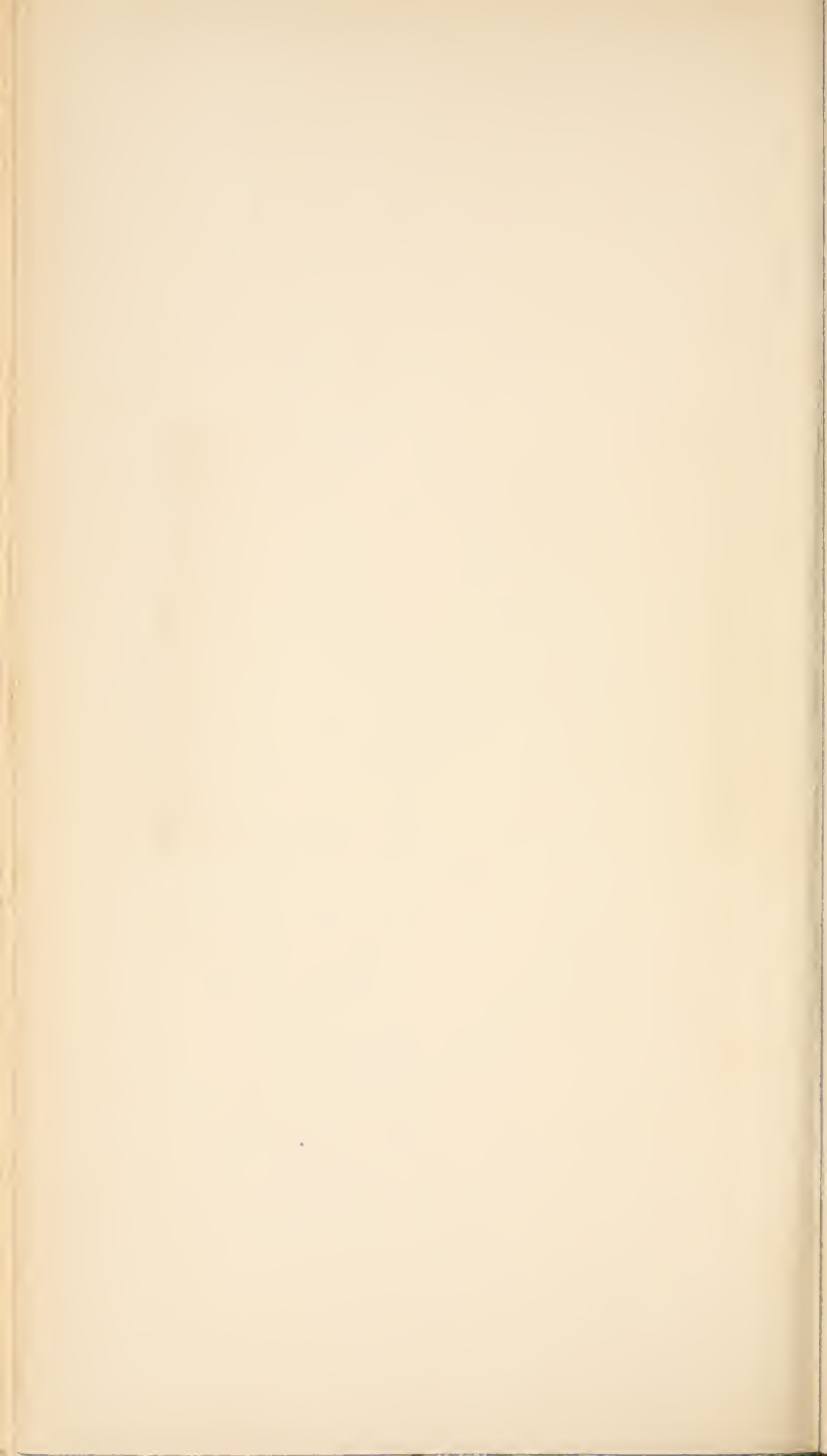
O HERMES, guide of spirits, lead me now,
And Persiphrassa, empress of the dead !
The breath of life is gone, and I, a shade,
May now descend the unreturning way ;
The slope is gentle to the land of rest,
The air is sweet, and every shadow kind ;
I see the river and the ebon bark,
The ghostly shore, the fields of asphodel —
Farewell, O earth, farewell forevermore !

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